



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0235SD-1 for Rapid City Area School District 51-4

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's vision is appropriate, but lacks detail to better understand what the district's approach particularly to increasing equity.</p> <p>Board adopted District goals and priorities are clearly stated. These overarching statements align at a high level with the vision of the RTT-D program as outlined in the narrative table. Specific details of the district vision are limited and difficult to judge the specific components of the reform vision.</p> <p>The district's first priority provides guidance to fulfill turning around low-achieving schools, building capacity, and developing effective teachers and principals.</p> <p>Priorities 2 and 3 serve to adopt standards, curriculum and assessments to prepare students to succeed through alignment to the common core standards and college and career ready standards. The goal notes that the curriculum is to be "viable" and "relevant", both which are critical to implementation success for the district. The focus on technology and Life and Career skills to prepare students for post-high school efforts is clearly envisioned in the narrative. The final priority lays the groundwork for individualizing education.</p> <p>The Student Data System anticipated is the state (SDDOE) longitudinal data system. The district is proactively intending to customize the system to collect ongoing formative assessment data.</p> <p>The district intends to use an additional learning management system to map and assess student progress within personalized learning environments; showing they understand the need to track individual student achievement data, and to develop a forward thinking instructional plan for each student based on student needs. However, the information specifying how students will receive personalized learning is limited.</p> <p>The District will implement the SDDOE teacher and principal evaluation systems and already have a superintendent evaluation system in place.</p> <p>Although each of the four assurance areas are addressed and matched to the district priority, more specific processes and tools, or elaboration on the tools noted would help define exactly how the priorities are envisioned to meet the assurance areas.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Whether the approach supports high quality implementation is not readily clear in this section. The information was difficult to compile to evaluate sufficiency. However, the next section expands on the district-wide process and provides evidence that the district's approach might support high quality implementation.</p>		

The administration's role in approach to implementation is not stated. This section touches upon personalized learning, capacity building and learning goals and measures development in more detail, but does not address other RTT-D assurance areas such as retaining highly effective teachers and principals, or student data systems.

PLCs are primarily responsible for guiding and focusing the reform effort in each school. Training for school staff to develop PLCs appears sufficient with initial training provided, imbedded focused afternoon PLC time and implementation plan development. Common non-negotiable focus areas will direct each school's PLC work. The focus areas will build capacity and specify learning goals and measures. These PLC tasks align with the overall vision of the district and support high quality implementation of these specific facets of the reform plan. Administration role in the support or oversight of the PLCs is not explained.

Key partners are identified to support reform efforts within the district. The SSDOE and Technology and Innovation in Education (TIE). TIE will provide staff development to implement balanced literacy and inquiry based math focused online and blended learning opportunities to personalize education. The partner roles are noted, but not clearly explained.

The district's plan to roll out the personalized/customized learning strategies in three cohorts across the four grant years is reasonable for realistically implementing significant change. The district shows forethought in providing for re-assessment of grade level versus content area-based expansion through the cohort after Year 1.

The process for schools to participate is addressed by noting the reform is district wide, including all schools, teachers and students PK-12th grade. A participating student and schools list with several demographic breakouts is included in the attachment and another table is found in section A(4) with participating educator data. The table providing school demographics in section A(4) has incorrect data in columns E and I. The percentage of Total LEA low-income population was not calculated correctly so it is difficult to see the percentage of low-income students in each school compared to the total student count.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	3
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district will focus on whole-system reform, defined as doing well with a small number of essential core policies and strategies without distraction. The narrative references six fundamental reform strategies for effective reform and displays the theory of change diagram based on the Board approved district priorities and goals. The application provides limited details across sections which read together provide a sparse plan. The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan as requested, describing how the reform will be implemented in the district or scaled up to the entire district student body. There is no complete plan including timeline, deliverables, goals and activities statement. The responsible party is noted in this section as being the PLC, which is not likely to be effective without administrative support. Other groups are noted as responsible for a few tasks, but a comprehensive plan is not available.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides clear process objectives to accomplish each of the four district priorities aligned with the RTT-D educational assurance areas. The process objectives support the vision and the likelihood of the reform priorities resulting in improved student learning, and performance. No mention is made in the plans to treat the GAP subgroups differently than the entire district. Increasing equity may result from the district-wide reform, but the theory of change is not made clear in the narrative regarding subgroups. The subgroups would likely benefit more from differentiated or increased reform efforts to help close the achievement gap.

The methodology for determining status and growth for performance on summative assessments is not clear. The data appears to present proficient or above percentage for baseline data and goal increases in percentage of students who are proficient.

(A)(4)(a) The Language Arts and Math score increases on summative assessments are reasonable considering the assumed baseline proficient or above scores are fairly high and the percent proficient increases are approximately 5% per year. The goals show ambitious data to all but close in-district achievement gaps in Language Arts and Math.

The Native American identified subgroup math gap is considerable and is not as likely to be met without additional intervention. No mention has been made of additional interventions beyond the general process objectives noted to hopefully close gaps for identified subgroups.

(A)(4)(b) No data is provided comparing district data against state averages to determine the extent of achievement gaps (as defined in the Notice) that may or may not exist. The GAP group is an aggregate of several subgroups identified by the applicant. The in-district Reading gap reduction is realistic and likely to show success with the process objectives implemented with fidelity. The in-district Math gap is even more ambitious with a 27% total goal increase over three years. The math gap is particularly dramatic between Native American and Economically Disadvantaged students, and probably not likely to reach equity without additional intervention as noted above.

(A)(4)(c) Graduation rates are very ambitious, particularly with the GAP subgroups and are likely unrealistic.

(A)(4)(d) College Attendance: no data available at this time; to be reported when available.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The record of success provided showed work accomplished much earlier than four years and limited work with the past four years. Deficiencies include insufficient data such as raw student data, more charts showing achievement or other success, or other evidence beyond broad statements to demonstrate the record of success.</p> <p>The District's history of adopting a coherent and sustained approach to improvements in teaching and learning is reflected in their implementation of balanced literacy and then PRIME math. Math mean gain results following PRIME implementation display significant improvement for all students, including Native American and low income students, who had higher gains than the rest of the state's counterparts compared in the provided graphs.</p> <p>The district explained how it successfully worked to close the achievement gap in Math between Native American and low income students in their district as compared to their counterparts in the rest of the state. No data or explanation is provided as to closing the achievement gap between the District subgroups and the rest of the district population.</p> <p>Reform in persistently lowest-achieving schools is demonstrated by the implementation of full day Kindergarten two years ago in two high-need elementary schools. Following gains in literacy and numeracy in students with significant barriers to school readiness, the district committed to establishing full day Kindergarten in all the District schools. The expansion of a successful program indicates the district is able to identify and implement solutions for low achieving schools, and then expand the successful practice district-wide. Data is referenced but not provided to show the magnitude of improvement. The same applies to the explanation of restructuring General Beadle Community School in that it shows a significant commitment and project completion in a lowest-achieving school, but no evidence of the actions resulting in improvement are provided.</p> <p>The district explains current distribution of progress and performance data to students, parents and the public, but does not explain how that data has been successfully used to inform and improve instruction participation and services.</p> <p>High school graduation rates and college enrollment rates are not addressed.</p> <p>Other than limited data showing mean gains in Math for all students and subgroups, the application does not provide data showing other content area achievement gains, other learning outcome improvement, increased graduation rates or college attendance. Improvements in low performing schools is referenced in the narrative regarding full-day Kindergarten, but data is not provided. Math achievement gap closure is somewhat evidenced in the chart showing mean data gains in Math which were at higher levels than the state-wide mean gain. Data showing if a gap exists between district groups and the state counterparts, and the specific improvements would have been helpful to understand the progress toward closing any existing gaps.</p>		

The partnership with TIE indicates strong support for capacity building for continued reform efforts, but data or other evidence of success is not provided.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)

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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application documents significant transparency in LEA processes, practices and investments resulting in the high score.

The specifically explain transparency in salary and budget processes through publishing individual salaries in the newspaper and on the district website. The district further held multiple budget listening session with the community and makes the negotiated agreements and salary schedules public. Indicating support from the school, the application notes the local paper also covered the budget process, state funding decline, salary negotiations, accountability/school report cards and progress. Actual non-personnel expenditures are not specifically addressed in the narrative and it is not known whether the district makes that information available to the public or not.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

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9

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The application describes a favorable environment and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments noted in the proposal and briefly identified as online supplements and blended learning support.

Specifically, the SDDOE support and partnership letter indicates support for the project and declares compatibility with state policy and direction in addition to meshing with the state's ESEA waiver and new accountability system. Further, the application notes the SD Virtual School has begun to break down barriers associated with time, place, pace and path of education which should additionally remove barriers to personalized learning environments outside of the traditional classroom. The personalized learning environments envisioned have not be clearly explained, but as outlined should not conflict with existing law or policy. The applicant also notes that the SDDOE has committed to working with the district to overcome any unforeseen barriers as they become known.

Evidence of local support is provided through the Mayor's letter indicating no barriers to implementation.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

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6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application describes comprehensive recent stakeholder collaboration and engagement in developing the schools new reform vision and mission rbut not immediate involvement in this application specifically.

The district sought input and collaboration from 113 community stakeholders, of which 96 attended a half-day planning and consensus building event to identify and rank district goals and priorities. Additional opportunities have been presented through the budgeting process and meetings of many district-community partnership committees and organizations.

Evidence of current support of the application is provided in the list of signatures for community and parent organizations and a list of principals and teachers from each of the district's schools. The President of the Rapid City Education Association also signed the commitment statement in support of the application and the district reform priorities. Specific letters of support for the application from the Rapid City Mayor and South Dakota" US Senator Tim Johnson are included.

The past work along with the current signed support statements for the application shows significant and meaningful stakeholder engagement for all groups except students. Student involvement efforts in the development of the district reform plan is noted as one of the invited stakeholder groups, however, no signatory or other evidence of student groups is included in the application. As students are one of the most significant stakeholders who should have been involved, letters of support or other evidence of student specific support would have strengthened this section.

Lack of evidence of stakeholder engagement during the development of the actual RTT-D proposal (beyond the prior district vision and mission development process) or any revisions made as a result of the stakeholder participation would have better satisfied this criteria.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal identifies achievement gaps between Native American students and economically disadvantaged students in North Rapid Schools and the district's Westside Schools and the district as a whole that the proposal intends to address. However, the proposal does not present a plan for an analysis of the current status in implementing personalized learning environments or how they will address the gaps and needs of the North Rapid Schools. Specifically, the application did not describe the components of a high-quality plan including: goals, activities, timelines, deliverables or responsible parties for analyzing and addressing the needs and gaps resulting in the low score.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	13

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application describes significant detail in developing personalized learning environments and the systems and vendor examples that may provide the content to populate the planned Learning Management System. The plan is based in researched methods, products, and possibilities, but the implementation details are lacking, resulting in the high-mid range.

The proposal identifies four content processes on which the plan is based, all of which are relevant to addressing the criteria required in the plan. The district notes exiting action on the plan including adoption and implementation of a successful math curriculum already in place and the development and initial and ongoing training for PLCs to direct the plan at each of the schools. The proposal also reports significant progress in the development of formative assessments to measure current student progress toward mastery of skills to inform instruction.

The proposal outlines the addition of a learning management system (LMS) to augment their existing data systems to help develop and manage personalized sequences of instructional content for students. The proposed LMS will allow students, along with their teachers, to customize their learning pathway through the curriculum. Access by students to the system will help them understand what they are learning is key to success, as well to understand their own process toward mastering the critical college and career ready skills. The proposal identifies the "iTunes" learner-centered model of selecting or updating individual learning skills and resources from a large menu of Open Educational Resources for each student based on their learning progress and interests; a novel approach that is realistically implemented with the appropriate technology tools, software and training for staff and students. The narrative describes an affordable, seemingly effective method to mass-customize learning for each student using digital resources. Several example learning resource providers are listed with the tools they provide and how these tools meet the required criteria indicating consideration for high-quality instructional approaches/environments.

The proposal anticipates using "search recommendation engines" to sort digital resources to find those aligned with 21st Century Skills and Common Core standards.

The project leaders are tasked with selecting an appropriate LMS system which includes the ability to assess student progress toward mastery and provide that information to the student and teacher, allowing the student to direct their own learning using the system resources. The district has identified the necessary traits for the system to allow students to take significant control of their learning time, place, pace and path which is necessary to realistically implement truly individualized learning within teachers' existing schedules and commitments. Increased student control of their learning is expected to increase success in progress toward timely graduation with college- and career-ready skills in place.

Structuring the knowledge gain performance for the students in similar method as video games should be motivating and

encouraging to students and may increase the pace of learning for those who need to advance, while providing additional time for those who struggle with a concept. The proposal further identifies the need for and possible providers for computer-adaptive software in conjunction with the LMS to support varied levels of development for high need or advanced students.

The district approach to implementing instructional strategies for all participants includes blended learning, providing online/digital and face-to-face standards-based instruction. An illustrative example is provided as to how digital content can be more compelling in showing/explaining how the Krebs cycle works and then supported by teacher led discussion of implications and applications of the knowledge. The example is very helpful to understand how the district envisions combining digital and traditional delivery in a meaningful way.

The proposal addresses the need for students to master critical content, problem solving, creativity, etc. through the LMS and the development of student-driven learning. An outcome expected from the student-driven personalized learning is an enhanced ability to learn in general and to be better prepared for the careers of the future. Standards for students to master include Partnership for 21st Century Skills focusing on "Initiative and Self-Direction", intended to increase students' ability to problem solve and invest in their own personalized learning path. The proposal wisely notes that student autonomy will be increased by the teacher as students show capacity to manage it.

Regular feedback for updated individual student data to determine progress is intended to be provided by formative assessments generated by teachers, students, parents and the LMS. No examples of how that data will be generated by students or parents are provided or how the student will access or use the data. The proposal indicates assessments may be part of some of the accessed digital resources and that the teacher PLCs are developing additional formative assessments. How this data will be addressed between the student and teacher is not clear.

How the district intends to provide feedback for personalized learning recommendations is not clear.

Accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students is briefly touched upon as noted above through computer adaptive software, but no methods are suggested for students who do not best learn through digital content or if the digital content is not effective.

The proposal identifies training for students in new technology systems and tools which will help them understand what they are learning is key to success and to align their learning goals with their personal goals. Each student will have access to the technology through a provided mobile electronic device such as a laptop or tablet.

The narrative notes multiple types of blended learning and the Major Tasks list identifies a task of each school to adopt and adapt blended learning models at their school. The plan does not address how the multiple types of blended learning or the technology will be managed at the school or district level.

The proposal provides a table of tasks, timelines and responsible parties to implement the LMS, training, and personalized learning environments in the identified grade span cohorts in the schedule identified in Section A. No method of support are identified if the technology does not integrate well, or if the progress toward student-led learning is very slow and the teachers have insufficient time to lead the students' individualized learning path.

Overall, the plan narrative is fairly comprehensive, with an innovative and ambitious goal to empower students to take control over their learning, leading to critical life-long skills in addition to content mastery. The implementation steps are very high level and although they provide broad tasks, they do not report the level of detail necessary to understand how many of the facets envisioned in the narrative of the plan will be realistically implemented.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	9
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal provides an inadequate plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment and lacks a detailed timeline for implementation which limits the credibility of the plan. The omission of a plan to increase the number of students who receive instruction for effective and highly effective teachers and principals also led to the resulting lower-mid range score.

The proposal's strengths include noting that the district has a history of successful implementation of new practices and curriculum with support from existing, successful PLCs. The achievement data provided indicates the district is generally

capable of high proficiency levels in Reading/Language and Math indicating the PLCs and educators have overall effective practices in place to build upon. Additionally, the district indicates it has learned the importance of information, communication and consensus for changes in educational practices at the local level for a new initiative to succeed and intends to use apply this understanding to implementing the RTT-D proposal. Past record of success does not indicate a reform effort of the magnitude of the RTT-D proposal so a thorough and high-quality plan is critical to the successful implementation in RCAS. Key support roles have been planned for in adding eight Customized Learning Leaders to work with existing district reading and math specialists to support teacher implementation of personalized learning paths. These positions are appropriate, if not critical to provide ongoing coaching and support as the teachers' role changes through personalized learning implementation.

The proposal indicates all educators receive training and PLC support to develop foundational knowledge in support of: customized learning; assessment data analysis to measure student progress toward standards and use data to inform instruction; differentiated instruction to adapt content and instruction for common and individual tasks and optimal learning approaches; motivation for learning to identify optimal learning approaches responsive to individual student academic needs and interests; and technology systems. Principals and Vice Principals will further receive leadership development training to support the PLCs and individual teacher implementation of the proposed reform measures. Collaborative Work Groups, smaller sub-groups within each school are described to be created to engage in the day-to-day management and process of customized learning. The duties of the PLCs and the Collaborative Work Groups are ambiguous.

Educators will receive online and face-to-face training to support effective implementation of personalized learning through summer institutes, graduate courses and early-release Wednesday sessions. Ongoing coaching and support through the PLCs is intended to provide classroom support for teachers to implement the reform measures with greater fidelity. The proposal envisions teachers shifting their role to collaborative teams to manage data, resources and content to guide individual students. This vision is supported by research identifying peer coaching as the most effective transfer of knowledge into practice.

Limited information is provided as to how the district intends to improve teacher and principal practice and effectiveness by using data from evaluation systems. The proposal indicates Principals and vice-principals will receive training on using the new SDDOE evaluation system results to make recommendations, identify professional development and support for improving teacher performance and to reflect on their own performance. It does not provide specifics as to how or whether the teachers will be involved in this process. Frequency of feedback on individual and collective effectiveness to provide recommendations and support is not addressed, but the proposal notes that school leaders will be trained to customize their plans for improving individual and collective leadership. TIE, a project partner will provide much of the training.

The previous section provided several example digital learning resources (content and assessments) digital and tools the educators will have access to for personalizing education and sharing resources, but they are not referenced in this section. The Teaching and Leading plan does not reference specific resources or systems except to note that training will be provided to better understand the student information system, STARS longitudinal data system and the proposed new learning management system.

Tools to match students needs with specific resources and approaches to provide feedback is not addressed in the Teaching and Leading plan, but is alluded to in the previous section through possible search engines.

The plan provides inadequate information as to access school leaders and leadership teams have to policies, tools, data and resources including evaluation system information or other data to help improve individual or collective educator effectiveness. The plan neither addresses school climate for continuous improvement training nor systems and practices to close achievement gaps.

The proposal does not provide a plan for increasing students who receive instruction from effective teachers and principals including hard-to-staff schools, subjects and specialty areas.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	14

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

High-quality plan to support project implementation through policies and infrastructure

The applicant provides well-organized responses to the selection criteria and sufficiently addresses each criterion resulting in the high score. The proposal defines existing policy in support of personalized learning and the anticipated acquisition of necessary infrastructure (Coaches, systems and devices) to personalize instruction.

Central office support to schools is well defined with the necessary Collaborative Leadership Team members expected to select and collaborate with the RTT-D Project Director to ensure consistent and cohesive approaches to serving all learners. The noted district-wide staff additions are well planned and critical to the success of the proposed project.

Specifically, the addition of a fourth Digital Education Specialist supports the increased technology needs the teachers and students will need to implement the new systems and tools and the support of eight new Customized Learning Leaders/Coaches will support the teachers to meet the reform objectives.

School leadership teams appear to have sufficient flexibility and autonomy for schedules, staffing, and implementation through the PLCs and the Collaborative Work Groups to select the blended learning models most appropriate for their school and to implement the district priorities as described. Limited information is provided regarding and school-specific budget or staffing flexibility and autonomy.

The district is well placed for student progression and credit earned based on mastery. Current policy allows for mastery-based advancement and the anticipated new data systems will provide assessments to more easily, and independently measure mastery of subject matter for each student, rather than basing measurements on time.

The proposal describes the opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery at multiple times in multiple ways will be provided through the personalized learning paths developed by the teachers and students using digital resources associated with the new LMS and access to a personal computing device by each student.

All students are expected have access to relevant customized learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible through the addition of customized learning environments. The district's fourth priority is to ensure diverse opportunities for all students to learn and be academically successful directs the RTT-D proposal to accommodate all student's needs in selecting technology systems and devices. Of some concern is the lack of discussion to address personalization of learning for students in which digital content and added technology is not a successful mode for learning.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district's plan to support implementation of personalized learning through policies and infrastructure to provide support and resources when and where needed is addressed throughout the narrative and specifically in this section. The details of a high-quality implementation plan are difficult to compile across the narrative. The description of the process provides adequate information to show forethought for sufficient technical support for implementation and lends credibility to the implementation plan. However, the specific goals, timeline, activities, and deliverables for the infrastructure support for the implementation plan are difficult to discern and/or minimally addressed to judge feasibility.

The district proposed a four year roll out of one-to-one computing devices and access to personalized learning plans for all students. Students, parents and educators will have access to content, tools and learning resources in and out of school via the personal computing device in the year affecting their grade for implementation.

All stakeholders have access to appropriate and multi-source technical support. Support will be provided by the existing well-staffed technology employees and Digital Education Trainers and the proposal adds two additional technology positions to support the education technology expansion. Parents and students have access via email to their teacher, Collaborative Learning Teams and Digital Education trainers when they have technology issues in addition to initial training when receiving the personal computing device and installed technology support video casts on the device itself.

The narrative confirms that the student information system (Skyward) , which allows parents and students access to information through a family portal, does export info in open data format to use in other learning systems. The narrative

does not confirm the other systems (STARS and the new systems to be selected) will use interoperable formats. Parent and student access to specific mastery progress for individual standards and skills is planned through the customization of STARS and the new LMS to help direct their own personalized education path. Details regarding how or by who, this customization will occur.

As noted, detailed goals, timelines, activities and deliverables are not easily identified and addressed. The basic timeline in Section C is the only information regarding timeline for tasks with associated responsible parties.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>The proposal provides a limited description of the evaluation and continuous improvement process.</p> <p>The district strategy for continuous improvement identifies an external evaluator who recently co-edited a field book on customizing teaching and learning to guide the process. The external evaluator will work with an assistant evaluator with support from relevant district and community organization members comprising the Collaborative Evaluation Team to conduct continuous improvement efforts. Quantitative data to be collected includes progress toward meeting identified performance measures and district priorities and process objectives. Qualitative data to be collected will gage progress toward district priorities and process objectives.</p> <p>The evaluation team will meet twice per year to review compiled data and make recommendations for improvement or revision based on the data. The plan does not state who will receive the recommendations for improvement or revision or who will take action on the recommendations. The narrative notes the executive team will review program information and progress quarterly, but does not indicate what they will do with the information.</p> <p>Timelines and opportunity for regular feedback on progress toward goals is not readily assessed without a timeline of planned Evaluation Team meetings or opportunities for whomever is responsible to make changes to review any feedback provided. Feedback opportunities are described as the Evaluation Team members being charged with relaying evaluation information to their constituents and staff. How that feedback is collected or used is not indicated. PLCs are noted to have access to information, but how that information is expected to be used to communicate or engage staff is not explained.</p> <p>Opportunity for correction and improvement during the grant should occur following each of the two annual Evaluation Team meetings. No information is provided for correction or improvement opportunities after the grant.</p> <p>The applicant intends to publicly share information via the district website, district data systems, and through semi-annual community meetings.</p> <p>Information as to how the district will monitor and measure the information on the quality of RTT-D investments such as professional development, technology and staff is not addressed. Missing strategic information such as a timeline, deliverables, and parties responsible reduce the overall credibility of the strategy to affect continuous improvement.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>Multiple opportunities for the Evaluation Team to disseminate information are delineated in the narrative, however, opportunities for stakeholder responses and planned engagement opportunities are not defined.</p> <p>Ongoing communication and engagement with internal stakeholders is generally tasked to the Collaborative Evaluation Team members to relay evaluation information to their constituents and/or staff. Mention is not made with when or how the information from the students, staff or PLCs will be gathered or used. PLCs and school Collaborative Work Groups are</p>		

noted to have access to the student management systems and access to RTT-D evaluation information. How the PLCs and Collaborative Work Groups will use the information or otherwise be engaged by the evaluators is not explained.

The only scheduled or routine data analysis noted is that the RCAS Executive Team will review program information and progress quarterly.

External stakeholders will receive information through semi-annual community meetings and information will also be provided through the RCAS website and the Skyward/STARS teacher and family/student portals. This is a strong example of stakeholder engagement and opportunity to review data and provide feedback.

The only meaningful engagement opportunity noted with two-way dialog stated is the community meeting forum.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Sparse data is provided and the data presented is incomplete and confusing. The applicant lists 13 performance measures in the narrative then imbeds 12 performance measures in the tables; leading to confusion regarding what exactly will be measured and what the progress goals are through this project.

The application cautions readers that the SDDOE measures and standards are changing during the course of the grant and that the performance targets may need to be revised based on the new systems. However, initial targets, despite lack of baseline data, are largely not identified as requested.

Confusing aspects of the performance targets are due to: baseline year not indicated when data was present; and performance measure tables do not match each of the numbered list of performance measures in description.

Annual targets were only proposed in six performance measures, the rest are not fully responsive to the request for ambitious but achievable targets. Subgroup targets are neither identified nor populated with baseline data or annual targets.

The annual target for all students participating in customized learning is ambitious but achievable at 100% by the end of the grant.

The 5th grade reading annual targets are confusing (possibly the second row should have stated math and not a second reading), but the percentage proficient increase is reasonable as well as ambitious but achievable. Both K-5 and 6-8 attendance rate targets are ambitious but achievable.

Past subgroup indicator data would have been helpful to show intended increases for Native American or Low Income subgroups, as was broken out in prior examples of subgroups, even though the new gap groups does not have baseline data. The 11th grade reading and math proficiency increase targets are also ambitious but achievable.

The applicant did not provide a performance measure indicating the health or social-emotional leading indicator of its plan.

Significant requested information is omitted, resulting in the low score.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application presents a list of guiding questions aligned with the district's priorities and process objectives proposed to gather qualitative data. The stakeholder groups expected to respond to the questions are not identified. The guiding questions listed are not specific enough to evaluate the effectiveness of the grant investments made (i.e. specific positions, professional development, technology, contracted services).

Quantitative data will be gathered from the STARS longitudinal data system and from the PLC evidence of student learning. The narrative states that the qualitative data will be reviewed against quantitative data in effort to show effectiveness, or need for adjustment.

The purpose and need for evaluating the effect of the process objectives is clearly explained. The mechanics of who, how, when and where the data will be collected, reviewed, analyzed and addressed for improvement is not noted with detail except that the narrative mentions quarterly meetings and reports.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>RCAS places strong importance on using existing resources in a more focused manner to support system-side change and used this filter in developing their grant budget proposal. Project Support is from current district resources includes PLCs time and development, , curriculum and Common Core adoption and alignment, student assessments, and existing district leadership.</p> <p>State financial support from SDDOE includes: Common Core training, teacher and principal evaluation system development, and STARS longitudinal data system development. Local community contributions are also provided in support of early and extended learning, college and career preparation, health and safety and family engagement.</p> <p>The overall budget is reasonable and sufficient to develop and implement at the rate of just over \$500 per student per project year.</p> <p>The applicant provides clear rationale for the investment and priorities as aligned to the existing district goals and priorities established through intensive community and school processes for school reform. The application also provides a vision of personalized education for each student by the end of the project, which is rationally tied to the RTT-D investments requested. 47% of the student affected by the grant are low income and would unlikely be able to access the necessary technology and resources to receive a personalized education without additional investment from an outside source. The proposal further shows how the existing district federal title money is used to support the district goals and priorities the project envisioned through this proposal, creating a supportive funding commitment to the core processes of the project.</p> <p>Sustainability of the project is anticipated to replicate the district's past success in imbedding successful reform practices and identifying in advance the costs the district will absorb to continue key positions for ongoing success and continuation of the program. The only weakness was the limited information identifying one-time costs versus ongoing operational costs. The identification and categorization of these costs is very helpful to developing a realistic sustainability plan beyond the grant term.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Sustainability of the project may be feasible based on the district's past success in imbedding successful reform practices following the initial reform funding as demonstrated by the successful institutionalization of the PRIME Math system. However, the proposal lacks the requested high-quality plan components such as a timeline, deliverables, and parties responsible. The application did not provide an assumed budget for the three-year period beyond the grant to show planning for how and where funds will be secured to continue the reform efforts.</p> <p>The district briefly explained it will focus significant costs on professional development which can carry positive results long after the grant funding expires. Positions required to support the most effective project components will be continued through district funding sources following completion of the grant. The district also has a plan to refresh the one-to-one computing technology devices after the grant expires by saving money on traditional texts and anticipating more affordable devices in the future. Although the noted large-scale costs were addressed in the plan, many other costs and how they would be provided for were not.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant described a coherent partnership with multiple community and government organizations to provide PreK-Adult education, family and wellness support based in large part in the restructured General Beadle Community School to primarily serve the high needs population of North Rapid City. The partnerships are united in goal as well as location in sharing many of their service locations in the new community school building.

The proposal identified eight population-level desired results for students (and some for their families) that will support if not align with the applicant's broader RTT-D application. The support measures focused largely on wellness, community and family, but several also focused reading within families, importance of graduation, college and careers and access to technology. Specific achievement or educational readiness measures were not identified.

The proposal did not address how the selected indicators will be tracked to measure the results or how the data would be used to target resources. The proposal did not address how the North Rapid City project would be scaled beyond the participating students. The narrative indicated in the table of partners and resources that students from multiple schools would be served, but the participants were not otherwise clearly identified.

The partnership integrates education and other services through the proximal location and intentional sharing of information between service providers and educators at the General Beadle Community School and through the Community Partnership Council.

Building capacity of staff in participating schools was not described in the narrative, also omitted are annual ambitious yet achievable performance measure targets. The sparse detail resulted in the low score.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The proposal focused in large part on the development of the district's fourth priority: Ensure diverse opportunities for all students to learn and be academically successful. The applicant proposes accomplishing this task through acquiring software and hardware allowing one-to-one computing devices to provide education place, pace, process and path options best set for each students. The students will work with their teachers to absorb control over their own educational goals, tasks and progress. Each school will be responsible for selecting the modes of blended learning to best support their needs. Significant staff and technology support is anticipated to implement the personalized learning opportunities for each student.

Total	210	126
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

A. Vision (40 total points) Application #0235SD-2 for Rapid City Area School District 51-4

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>It is stated that over the past two years the school district has revisited its vision and mission statement with multiple efforts to engage families, students, staff and community in its formulation. The mission and vision statements focus on building a community of learners who will all achieve their full potential. It is stated that the district has engaged in a process of collaborative goal setting and established 4 priority areas that focus on reform: These are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) improving organizational capacity and staff effectiveness (ii) adopting a viable curriculum aligned with core standards (iii) developing an assessment system aligned with Common Core (iv) ensuring diverse opportunities for all students to learn and be successful <p>While these priorities are ambitious and achievable, what is lacking in section A1 is a comprehensive explanation of how (a) they will be achieved, and (b) the specifics of how they will accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning and increase equity through personalized student support. In section A2, however, some details are documented: it is stated that the structures to achieve these priorities will be grounded in developing PLC's in each building. Staff has participated (Aug, 2012) in two days training in launching PLCs, with a further 27 afternoons built into the 2012-2013 schedule, for collaborative work on student learning, learning outcomes, and common formative assessments. Of the four core educational assurance areas, the district has clearly outlined a vision for adopting Core Curriculum and assessments. What is absent is the linkage of initiating a guaranteed and viable curriculum to the provision of diverse learning opportunities for students. It has stated that a statewide mechanism for collecting longitudinal student data is in the process of being created. There is no evidence, however of when this will be established, and it is unclear how such a system will increase organizational capacity. Also vague is how the district plans to train teachers and principals in the use of these data to improve student achievement, although an underlying assumption may be that this will occur through PLCs. While the district proposes to implement teacher, principal and superintendent evaluation systems, details of the process by which it will use these tools to recruit, develop, reward and retain effective teachers are lacking. It is assumed that if these are used effectively that professional development to address any deficiencies will be provided. However, the vision does not address any training in use of these new evaluation instruments by the district so that the data obtained are consistent and reliable across the district. Nor does it provide any specific example of professional development that it will implement. While PLCs may be a vehicle for increasing student achievement, specifics, other than time built into the school year, on how this will be done are unclear.</p> <p>The vision fails to articulate a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A2(a) It is stated that all schools in the district and all grade levels will participate in the Race to the Top initiative; however, rationale for the inclusion of all schools is absent. The demographics of the schools are very different, with some schools having low numbers of low income students and other schools having upwards of 99%; similar differences occur among schools regarding the numbers of Native American students. Therefore some schools cater to a highly diverse and high needs population while others do not. Criterion A2(a) is not met.</p> <p>A2(b) The total number of participating schools and students is provided. Criterion A2(b) is met.</p>		

A2(c) The total number of participating students and educators is provided including the total number of students from low income families for each school. What is absent is the **total number** of high needs students; however, a break down of demographics for some of the high needs groups is provided in the appendix including ELL students, special education students, Native American students and homeless students. District-wide demographics indicate that 47% of the district's students are from low income families, 19% are native American students, and 12% are special education. No data are provided regarding students below grade level and those at risk of not graduating, a number that is important to consider when implementing objectives to increase the career and college readiness of students..

The district's plan is to increase staff and organizational effectiveness, implement a guaranteed and viable curriculum that includes life and career skills and provide diverse opportunities for all students to learn. The district acknowledges its diverse population including Native American and ELL learners that account for over 25% of its student body as well as the high percentage of low income students. However, its reform proposal does not specifically address the various needs of these diverse groups and the differing approaches in different schools depending on demographics. This criterion is partially met but the plan is lacking in details of how it will be adapted to meet the needs of different schools, specifically those schools with high numbers of low income students and Native American students.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

While the proposal cites Michael Fullan's (2009) reform strategies, discussion of a plan to implement Fullan's strategies for meaningful reform within this specific district is not developed. The use of research-based strategies to ground the plan is admirable and Fullan's strategies provide a solid groundwork upon which to build district change and meaningful reform. However, unclear is how these strategies connect to what specifically the district will do to put the reforms into practice district-wide to achieve its objectives.

Although the applicant includes a model for change, the plan to enact the model is lacking in specifics and it is unclear how the district will use the model to implement reform, increase student, and provide personal learning opportunities for the entire student body. There is no evidence of how the district will transform theory into practice or how the specific objectives will be translated into improved student learning outcomes.

Also undocumented is how the district will scale up the plan beyond the participating schools for example to involve families and community in the reform process.

While the model is grounded in theory, there is little evidence of a high quality plan to help the applicant reach the outcome goals.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	4
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant outlines four priority areas: To improve organizational capacity and staff effectiveness; adopt a guaranteed and viable curriculum, develop a comprehensive assessment system, ensure diverse learning opportunities for students .

A4(a) The assessment data are presented for the entire district and are not disaggregated by school or by grade level. The data include SPI scores for reading/language and math. It is not specified for what the acronym, SPI, stands. It is unclear whether all students in all grades participate in the SPI tests for reading /language and for math. Only two sub-groups are provided in Table 4a - Native American and economically disadvantaged students. No data are provided for the rest of the sub-groups including the White population. No data are provided for the State ESEA targets and so a comparison between the district goal and the State ESEA target is not possible. The district is aiming by the SY 2015-16 for growth to 94% proficient in reading/language and to 89% in math for all subgroups. This goal means that the overall performance in both subject areas must rise by 20% in a four year period, and in math, for the two identified sub-groups by 41% and 36% respectively. This goal for improved learning and performance and increased equity of performance is highly ambitious and it is questionable as to whether it is achievable. Because the data are aggregated and provide one district score that envelopes all schools and all grade levels, they provide an inadequate representation of district performance, per grade level, and per school, and so measuring the impact of the applicant's vision will be unrealistic.

A4 (b) For the school years 2012-2013 onwards, the district will report achievement of all subgroups in one group - termed the GAP group. There will be no disaggregation of data for individual subgroups. The goal stated is to reduce the achievement gap between all students to zero by 2015-2016 and for the entire group student body to achieve 94% and 89% proficiency (reading/language and math respectively) in 2015-2016. Given that the current stated proficiency for students with disabilities is 42% and 31% in the two measured subject areas, this target may be over ambitious and extremely difficult to achieve. While the applicant's vision has the potential to increase student achievement and reduce sub-group achievement gaps, in practice it may be unrealistic to expect all sub-groups to increase their performance so that the achievement difference becomes non-existent.

It is questionable as to the value of aggregating the scores of all sub-groups as such a practice provides no indication of for which groups the reforms are effective and for which they are not... and so the opportunity for attempting different strategies with different groups is lost. The rationale for this practice is provided later in another section. It appears that the new state data management system will report all sub-groups aggregated into one - termed the GAP group.

A4 (c). One of the goals of the proposal is to prepare students to be career and college ready. The district indicates it plans to increase graduation rate from an overall 77% in 2011-2012 to 95% in 2015-2016 – an increase of 18%. For the various sub-groups however, the specified increase ranges from 45% (Native American) to 16% for Hispanics. As in A4 (b) the district proposes to aggregate data from all sub-groups in 2013-14 into one gap group. This level of achievement seems highly ambitious, in particular for the Native American, and somewhat unrealistic. As no statewide graduate rate targets are provided, it is not possible to ascertain if this projected graduation rate is line line with state targets. Little evidence is provided as to how the district will achieve such a large increase in graduation across its diverse groups.

A4 (d) No data are presented in the section for College enrollment.

A4 (e) No data are presented in the section for post-secondary degree attainment.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	9
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>B1 (a) In the narrative, the district claims to have a history in pursuing new and innovative approaches to meet the challenges of its diverse population. It provides details of various initiatives it has undertaken since 1996. The majority of the narrative describes the PRIME program for elementary mathematics. It provides data on district student growth in mathematics compared to the average state growth over the period 2003-2009. It is unclear to which grade levels (apart from the term elementary) these data pertain. The data indicate district growth above the state level in mathematics. Similarly, in comparison with the rest of the state, district elementary Native American students and low income students show greater gains in this test.</p> <p>The requirement, for this category, however, is to demonstrate growth within the last FOUR years, which would mean from the school years 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012. Although gains are claimed in student achievement these data are not presented. In addition, no cumulative data for high school graduation rates or college enrollment are presented. Various initiatives to ensure opportunities for diverse learners are described, but no evidence is presented to indicate the degree of success in raising achievement and promoting equitable learning. Evidence is lacking in this area.</p> <p>B1 (b) Low performing schools have not been specifically identified in this document as yet, although it is indicated that there are 10 Title One schools in the district.</p> <p>However, in the description, the district provides details of the implementation of full-day kindergarten in two high need elementary schools two years ago, and a Jump Start Program in two elementary schools was established this year. One school entered restructuring in 2005, and a new community school was built in an impoverished neighborhood in 2009</p>		

which has become the hub to develop resources to serve the needs of children and families throughout the district. This appears to be a successful reform. The district has partnered with Technology and Innovations in Education to provide professional development for teachers and to attract funding for various ongoing projects.

While the district is involved in innovative projects, the proposal fails to clarify which schools are persistently lowest-achieving or low-performing schools, and so it is unclear whether the initiatives they describe (apart from the Jump Start program and Full-day kindergarten program specific to two schools) only occur in low performing schools or are district-wide.

B1(c) It is stated that school and district student achievement data are provided on State Department of Education website and teachers provide individual student data to families. It is not documented how this information is used by teachers, parents and student in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Actual individual salaries of all personnel (certified, non-certified, and administrative staff) as well as all non-personnel related expenditures are published in the local paper. The process appears to be highly transparent with community engagement in the budgetary process.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	6
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The state of South Dakota has achieved an ESEA flexibility waiver to implement a new system of public school accountability. (Note: Education Act (ESEA) waiver provides the state flexibility in following No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements. The waiver allows the state to use its own accountability system). The new state accountability system includes 5 key categories of indicators that match well with the Race the Top Core areas - student achievement and academic growth, high school completion, college and career readiness, effective teachers and principals. S. Dakota adopted the Common Core Standards in 2010. Along with other states, it is developing a new assessment instrument which will be available in 2014-15.

Reporting Student achievement and Growth

A new Student/Teacher Accountability Reporting System STARS is under development at the state level which the district will use to monitor post-secondary enrollment and completion and key indicators of college and career readiness.

Concerning for measuring the success of this RTTT grant is that within the new STARS system, the state and districts using the STARS system will not report achievement of sub-groups individually. Rather, it will group scores of all sub-groups into a single large GAP group. Therefore, no disaggregation will occur, making it impossible to demonstrate which sub-groups are showing growth in learning and those that are not. As one of the main focus points of RTTT is in individualized learning for all students, the question arises as to how the district will report data to demonstrate the performance of individual sub-groups. The rationale is understandable, in that some students may fall within two or more sub-groups, therefore there scores may be counted more than once, which may contribute to more sub-groups not meeting AYP. However, such a means of reporting is not sufficient to ascertain the success of the multitude of sub-groups the district serves.

Effective Teachers and Principals

The state is working on new evaluation tools for principals and teachers, to be implemented in 2014-2015; Fifty percent of the performance rating will be based on student academic growth. The district plans to consider this instrument for revision and adoption by the district - a time frame for the adoption process by the district is not provided. The use of such a system may provide more consistency in teacher evaluation across the state and by linking teachers to student scores may help identify the areas in which teachers require professional development. Thus, using the state staff evaluation tools should not impact adversely on district autonomy as it seeks to implement personal learning environments, and may have a positive impact.

In conclusion, the goals and of objectives and policies of the state seem compatible with the goals of the district and the Race to the Top initiative with the exception of not reporting achievement of specific sub-groups. The district appears to be relying solely on the state STARS data collection system for reporting data, which by aggregating all sub-groups into one large GAP group, provides limited information on performance of sub-groups, and thus limits the extent to which the district can ascertain its success at a disaggregated level. Reliance on the state data system is a severe limitation to assessing the effectiveness and impact of the RTTT initiative on student achievement and graduation rates in the various sub-groups and seems to be contradictory to the philosophy of individualization of the learning environment.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal states that over the past two years, the district has made multiple efforts to engage a variety of stakeholder groups in a collaborative goal setting process to establish system-wide reform to transform teaching and learning and to ensure all students are prepared for college and careers. In 2011, a group of 96 stakeholders participated in a half-day event to identify district priorities for teaching and learning. These priorities formed the groundwork for the Race to the Top Proposal. Therefore, although direct input into the actual RTTT proposal from stakeholders was not apparent, stakeholders' voices with regard to system reform were taken into account in formulating the proposal. There is no evidence of any process to allow for direct stakeholder input into formulating or revision of the proposal.

Signed letters or indicators of support from a variety of key stakeholders (S. Dakota state, parents and parent organizations, student organizations, early learning programs, tribes, the business community, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, local civic and community-based organizations, and institutions of higher education) are available in the Appendix. These provide ample evidence of state, district and community support for the RTTT project as well as involvement from a wide variety of community organizations.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a table that illustrates strong evidence of the achievement gaps in math and reading and in graduation rates between 5 schools in the district that serve high numbers of low income students and high numbers of Native American students and 5 other schools in which these two groups are minimal. However, the RTTT proposal is focused on the entire 23 schools that make-up the district and details of any gaps that exist in achievement in the 13 other schools are not documented.

While gaps are highly evident, lacking is a cohesive plan to address these gaps. The applicant's vision is to increase student achievement, graduation rates, and college and career readiness, the RTTT initiative focuses on the entire student population of the district and does not differentiate between the needs of different subsets of the student population, in particular the specific needs of high poverty students and native American students. While stating the aim of providing personalized learning environments for all students, no evidence is provided of how these might look for different groups of students. While the applicant states it "believes that the ability to personalize/customize learning for all students has particular relevance for students with significant barriers to educational success" no evidence is provided of the district's current status in implementing personalized learning environments.

In conclusion, gaps have been identified, but there is no evidence of a concrete plan how the district will address these gaps specifically as they apply to low income and Native American students.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	13

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

C1(a) Currently the PLCs within the district schools are focusing on “what do we want students to learn” and “how will we know students are learning” and the priority has been to provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum and to common formative assessments to inform instruction. It appears the emphasis has been on what teachers need to know and do. There is no mention of any student input into the process or how parents might have input into the learning process.

The questions upon which the district plans to focus with the RTTT grant are “How will we respond when students do not learn?” and “How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient?” The plan includes an initial district focus on a technology infrastructure to support customized personalized learning. The district plans to adopt a learning management system (LMS). The applicant lists and describes several different LMS portals. The project leaders will investigate options and have an LMS in place by the 2013-2014 school year. Planning to have an LMS in place to start off the 2013-2014 school year may be an unrealistic target, especially since the selection process of a particular platform has not yet begun.

The district plans to provide a laptop, iPad, or other mobile device, upon which the LMS will be loaded, for each participating student. It will also provide training on the LMS for students and parents. Finally the district plans to blend online learning with face-to-face instruction. As the applicant notes, to be prepared for careers in the current environment graduates do need to be self-directed, capable of working independently and able to manage goals and time. The plan is lacking in the specifics of how students will be taught how to achieve these skills. It is vague concerning how an LMS will engage and empower all learners, in particular those students with high needs, how it will help them understand that learning is key to their success and to accomplishing their goals, and how it will help them specifically identify college and career goals. Equally unclear is how the plan addresses access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning. Although using an LMS may help students master critical academic content, it is not evident how it will promote teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, and creativity.

Finally, the plan provides no guidance as to the role that parents will play in such an approach to learning.

C1(b) Providing computers and high quality online curriculum programs provide the potential for individualizing the learning environments and for tracking success for all students. They may provide the opportunity for motivated students to forge ahead and provide access to high-quality digital learning content, which may, depending on the districts choice of digital curriculum, be aligned with college- and career-ready standards. In addition, they may also provide ready access to frequently updated assessment grades and to feedback loops when content is not mastered.

What is less clear is the role of teachers and what types of high quality instructional approaches they will provide. While the plan mentions a blended learning environment, it provides inadequate details of how it might be structured. Further, the extent to which programming will be delivered online is not addressed. It is unclear the extent to which entire curricula will be available online and how blended learning will be differentiated though-out the K-12 environment so that it is age appropriate. In addition there is no mention of how accommodations for high need students will be made. Specifically lacking is what a personalized learning environment would look like, for example in Kindergarten, in G5, in grade 12, or for students with high needs.

C1(c) The plan does specify mechanisms to provide training and (support – less so) to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

13

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that the district is currently well prepared to increase capacity to customize learning for all students. Its use of PLCs provides a strong foundation for building professional capacity. From its learning from two past initiatives, it recognizes the important of information, communication and building consensus for change initiatives.

C2 (a) The application partially meets these criteria. Professional learning communities have been implemented across the district with regularly scheduled meetings. In addition the district plans to provide professional development opportunities

for its educators by means of summer institutes, graduate courses, and early release Wednesdays in the following areas: formative assessment and data analysis; differentiated instruction; motivation for learning; LMS.

Professional development in differentiated instruction may help educators adapt content, improve instruction and develop personalized learning and teaching for all students. PD in formative assessment and data analysis may increase teachers' capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards. However, the state –wide STARS system for data management is yet under development. No time frame is provided for its completion. Increasing student motivation may impact students' attitude to setting and reaching career goals.

The district also plans to provide classroom support for teachers in the form of coaching but does not provide specifics of how that might be implemented in practice. However, at the end of section C, it is stated that a partner in the grant will assign learning specialists to work with the district's Digital Education Team (no information is provided as to the remit of this team is or of whom it is comprised), Customized Learning Leaders (no information is provided as to the remit of these leaders or what their role is) and Collaborative Work Groups no information is provided as to the remit of these groups or of whom they are comprised). The learning specialists will deliver foundational knowledge for customized learning in online and on-site training formats. Information on the specifics e.g. number of learning specialists, time frame of their coaching and on-site training is not provided.

Absent is PD in (i) personalized learning environments and college and career readiness. To be able to implement personal learning environments and guide students toward college and career skills effectively, teachers must know what they comprise; and, (ii) adapting learning opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, for example collaborative work, project-based learning, videos etc.

C2b

Teachers will receive PD in data analysis and formative assessment although no mention is made of specific resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements, tools to create and share these new resources, or processes to provide continued feedback about the effectiveness of these resources.

C2c

The district plans to provide leadership development for its principals and vice –principals who will engage in study about effective teamwork, shared decision-making, and change management. No specifics are provided about the form this professional development may take and it is unclear as to how PD in these areas will enable principals to structure learning environments that meet individual students' needs and accelerate student progress to college and career readiness.

The proposal also states that principals and vice-principals will receive training on using the results teacher evaluation systems to provide recommendations, feedback, supports and interventions as needed for teacher improvement. Teacher and principal evaluation tools are in the planning stage at state level (available 2014-2015 and mentioned previously in another section), and the district may consider using/revising these tools when they are available.

C2d

Evidence of a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals is lacking. No mention at all is made of hard-to-staff schools, teacher scarcity areas such as mathematics and science, and special education, although the district has a fairly large special education population.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	10
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
D (1)		
(a) Support for implementing the plan from district office is reasonable. A RTTT program leader will be appointed from the district level administrative team. An additional 1.0 FTE digital education specialist will be added to the current team of three. Eight customized learning leaders/coaches will be hired to support teachers, students, and families. There is an		

appropriate plan in place as to how these coaches will serve schools and a timeline is identified in which they will work with specific groups of schools.

(b) Providing leadership with flexibility to implement the plan: The district is aligning effort, resources, and time to support PLCs in each of its schools. It may be assumed that the planning process for implementing personalized learning may occur within these PLDs. The proposal states that the design of PLCs encourages flexibility and autonomy, although specific autonomy with regard to school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators, and school-level budgets is not detailed. Therefore the extent to which individual schools in the district have autonomy in these areas is not specified.

(c) The proposal states that currently content mastery is demonstrated through end of course examinations. It is stated that the district plans to move forward by identifying assessment measures that better reflect subject mastery. The STARS system will provide the opportunity for self-paced mastery. This section provides vague details on how students will progress on demonstrated mastery. Unclear is how students may progress at their own pace and how this will impact school scheduling.

(d) No concrete details are provided as to how students will have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. The underlying assumption seems to be that providing students with individual computing devices will automatically ensure that multiple avenues exist. These avenues will have to be built into online courses or developed by teachers themselves.

(e) The assumption again is that by providing students with computers will in itself facilitate personal learning. No instructional practices are outlined.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

D2

(a) **Ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders, regardless of income, have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school:** All students in a pre-determined four-year rotation will be provided with personal computing devices which they will bring to class and take home in the evening. Parents will receive information on how these devices will be used. This item is met. All students will have full access to handheld devices and LMS platform in and out of school.

(b) **Ensuring that students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders (as appropriate and relevant to student learning) have appropriate levels of technical support:** Currently the district employs 18 IT technicians to support district technology. The district has developed a team of Digital Education Specialists that works with the staff development division, and supports teachers in making learning and instruction more engaging and that will have the capacity to troubleshoot student devices and provide both technical and pedagogical support to teachers. The RTTT program will provide for an additional IT person and an additional digital education specialist. Eight Customized Learning Coaches will be provided by TIE. It is unclear as to the strategies that will be used to provide technical support to parents and students outside of the school day, for example if a Helpline will be available. One area that requires clarification is whether troubleshooting and maintaining 13,000 student computers as well as providing pedagogical support to teachers can be effectively achieved by employing only two additional technologists. The level of support outside the school day is unclear.

(c) **Using information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format:** The current system of communicating data to parents is explained. Although the new STAR system is

described, no mention is made as to whether it will allow students and parents the opportunity to export information in an open data format and to use the information in other electronic learning systems.

(d) **Ensuring that LEAs and schools use interoperable data systems:** The second data system, the LMS, that the district proposes to introduce using RTTT funds, has not yet been chosen and so it is impossible to ascertain whether or not the LMS chosen will be compatible/interoperable with the STARs system.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	2
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>No evaluation plan is presented. The proposal simply states that an external evaluator will be hired who will work with a District Collaborative Evaluation Team. The team will meet twice a year to review qualitative and quantitative data collected.</p> <p>No mention is made regard to what data will be collected, or how it will be collected.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will monitor, measure and publicly share the quality of its RTT investments, such as investments in professional development, technology and staff.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>It is stated the the Collaborative Evaluation team is the first layer of communication and engagement with stakeholders. It will disseminate web-based information accessible to teachers, students and families. It will hold community meetings twice per year - no information is provided regarding the purpose or format of these community meetings.</p> <p>The professional learning communities will have access to Student Management systems and RTT evaluation data</p> <p>The executive team will review program information and progress quarterly.</p> <p>Communication appears to be in one-direction - the provision of access to information by the Evaluation team to internal and external stakeholders. There is little evidence of any strategies to engage with internal and external stakeholders on how to revise and adjust the plan in accordance with data collected.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: <p>E(3) Performance measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The applicant must provide its rationale for selecting each measure; (b) How the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern; and (c) How it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress. <p>The applicant did provide 13 performance indicators. However some of these did not match the requirements set out in the sample table. For example, the sample table clearly states that #s of students served by highly effective principals and</p>		

teachers must be broken out by sub-groups as specified in RTTT guidelines. The applicant has changed this to Gap group - all sub-groups aggregated into one large group. In the 4-8 group and in the 9-12 group, the applicant did not propose at least one grade-appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator of successful implementation of its plan. In some cases the applicable population was not stated.

With respect to why the applicant chose these indicators, no rationale was identified. No evidence was provided as to how the applicant would review and improve the performance measures chosen over time if the indicators were insufficient to gauge progress.

In summary, the description of performance measures inadequately addresses the criteria outlined in this subsection.

No rationale was provided for

(a) choice of any of the measures

(b) how the measure provides information related to the plan

(c) how the district will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Section E(4) - The plans to evaluate the effectiveness of RTTT funded activities were unclear.

For each priority area, the objectives were stated, but no description of the current status in meeting the criteria was provided nor was a plan of how to evaluate the success of each priority included. Rather, each priority was followed by one or two research questions. No supporting evidence was provided.

Goals were provided but activities, timelines and deliverables were not. No ambitious but achievable performance measures or annual targets were provided.

The applicant will use RTTT funding for technology, teacher professional development, and extra technology staff - however no indications of how to measure the effectiveness are given.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

F(1)

a District funds will continue to support PLCs and related staff development to PLCs, Common Core, math and literacy instructional practices, and formative assessment. These funds include Title 1, Title 11A, and Title V11 as well as Special Education monies. State funding will also support Common Core training for teachers, development of teacher and principal evaluation systems, and the development and implementation of STARS, the student data management system. Funds used to support the project are identified clearly.

b. The costs appear to be reasonable and sufficient for the most part. However, it is unclear whether the cost of Software and licenses are included along with the computing devices. There is a budget category, Guaranteed and viable curriculum, but Software is not itemized in that budgetary area. The extent to which software and software licenses will be required is vague throughout the proposal, as are details regarding which curricula will be online and how they will be developed (COSTS for developing curricula are not mentioned) or out-sourced are not well-documented. The budget category "Supplies" is vague yet accounts for \$13M in the area of "creating diverse learning opportunities." Apart from the failure

to delineate Software expenses - expenses which will be ongoing after the RTTT funding expires, the proposed expenditure should be sufficient to complete the project.

(c) (i) This item is provides limited information. From the proposal narrative it seems that currently Title 1, Title 11, Title VII, and Special Education Funds are being used to support professional development in PLCs, assessment, Indian education, and creating personalized learning environments. Although a description of the funding sources that will be used to support this project is provided, the total revenue from each source is not identified and so it is unclear **how much** money will be available from the additional sources cited.

(ii) The information provided fails to clearly specify which funds will be used for one-time investments and versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

While the applicant provides details of what it learned about sustainability from a previous project, this proposal provides sparse details of how it will be sustained after the RTTT funding is exhausted. There is no evidence of the goals, activities, timelines and deliverables for the sustainability of the plan, of any additional funding to cover costs of the ongoing implementation, and no budget for three years after the term of the grant.

As the applicant notes, a major cost will be the continued upkeep and upgrading of computers for each student and the cost of an additional 1000+ computers per annum as a new Kindergarten class arrives (and the cost of the 4 year replacement plan for all computers). This will be a major cost in particular as 10% district budget cuts were described earlier in the project. It is stated that the district will be able to absorb all technology related costs through reduced costs of using e-textbooks rather than printed ones and redirection of technology courses. What is not mentioned is the ongoing costs of maintaining the LMS platform and the associated software for enrichment and for core curricula. Costs such as training of new teaching staff, trainings for parents are not addressed, as well as how to sustain the two extra IT positions that were created through the grant, and which appear necessary for support to students and to teachers.

There is little evidence other than anecdotal of a convincing plan and accompanying budget to ensure the initiative implemented to personalize student learning is sustained beyond the duration of the RTTT Funding

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

1. The applicant provides details of a multi-sponsor partnership initiated in 2005 to create a community school in the district. This partnership is ongoing today. It includes all day kindergarten pre-school programs, Head start and Jump start programs, summer school programs, adult Learning programs to name but a few. The aim is to design a cohesive and sustainable system of child and family services. It is evident that this multitude of programs with which the district partners do contribute to Absolute Priority 1.

2. The proposal identifies eight competitive preference priorities. However, none of these meet the specified criteria that they must pertain to educational results and other education outcomes. Therefore the specifics of this item are not met.

3. To track the selected indicators the applicant states that the partnership will design and develop a longitudinal data system to track and analyze the selected indicators at the student level for the participating students. The applicant states the partnership will use the data to develop action teams to address specific actions related to early learning, extended learning, graduation, family engagement and adult learning. Details of precise actions these teams would take are not provided and no focus is placed on what the teams would do to improve results for participating students, especially

students facing significant challenges. A strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students to other high-need students and communities in the LEA or consortium over time is lacking.

To improve results over time the consortium has a plan to conduct a comprehensive community needs assessment to identify gaps and needs, and develop a strategic planning process designed to fill the gaps and create a sustainable program.

No strategies are identified to build capacity of staff in participating schools and to provide them with tools and supports. This area has not been addressed.

No ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population-level are identified and no desired results for students are described. This area has not been addressed.

In summary, it is evident that many different organizations within the school district community contribute to absolute priority 1. To have so many initiatives ongoing is a strength. However, the lack of focus on addressing the required areas this competitive priority addresses is a major limitation.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has outlined a proposal that addresses how it will create learning environments designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the implementation of online learning environments that allow personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators and aim to accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning. Professional development is outlined that aims to increase the effectiveness of educators. Plans are outlined to decrease achievement gaps across student groups and to increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

Total	210	117
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0235SD-3 for Rapid City Area School District 51-4

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:		

The proposal had a limited reform vision. In most cases, the proposal seemed content with minimally meeting South Dakota State Department expectations. There was little evidence of serious effort to articulate a comprehensive and coherent vision beyond overly general statements and state expectations.

The proposal indicated that the overall vision was to have "All Rapid City Area School students achieve to their full potential."

The RTTD proposal had four Priorities:

1. Improve organizational capacity and staff effectiveness,
2. Provide a guaranteed, viable, relevant curriculum that includes life and career skills and technology literacy/21st Century Skills that is aligned with the Common Core Standards.
3. Develop a comprehensive system of assessment that is aligned with content standards, curriculum materials and instructional practices.
4. Ensure diverse opportunities for all students to learn and be academically successful.

The proposal indicated in a vague manner how they believed those four priorities interfaced with the application requirements associated with the four assurance areas but the information was difficult to follow.

The RTTD expectations for development of an evaluation system, preparing students for college or career, implementing a robust data system that would include the capability to match K-12 student data and higher education data were addressed only very generally and then primarily as responding to and incorporating the South Dakota Department of Education state expectations.

The proposal was inadequate in articulating a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. Instead the proposal noted some quite general statements that did not suggest parameters for an implementation plan as they related to addressing the four core educational assurance areas.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal had a strong plan for implementations. The proposal noted that the Rapid City Area Schools "will implement its RTTD program over a four year period, during which every school; teacher and student will be directly impacted by the transformation of PK-12th grade education in Rapid City." The charts provided the necessary information documenting 100% inclusion of all students and teachers. It should be noted that 47.1 percent of students were classified as low-income and thus this proposal as written exceed the minimum requirement of 40% by 7.1 percentage points.

While the proposal had a timeline for the phasing of the work, it did not provide much information on how it would provide support to schools and the score was reduced for that reason.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

RCAS had a strong conceptual plan for LEA-wide reform and change but it was less strong in its implementation plan. The proposal provided a clear and do-able approach to implementing the proposed work. The proposal had clarity about the primary means for addressing the work. It also had specific district goals that RCAS would see as priorities. They included viable and relevant curriculum, comprehensive assessment and diverse learning opportunities. Their primary implementation strategies were to utilize *Professional Learning Communities (PLC)* established in each school and work with and through an organization called Technology and Innovations in Education (TIE) that appeared to have the necessary knowledge and capacity to provide necessary support in an intensive and high-quality fashion. Emphasis will be on developing common district understanding, developing high-performing collaborative teams, clarifying what students need to know and be able to do in each grade and utilizing common formative assessment. The Learning Communities

representatives have been trained and staff development times have been scheduled and budgeted. Points were reduced because there was no chart that showed key goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, parties responsible

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal did not have quality information on LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes. It lacked compelling information that would lead to a belief that the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance. The district did not have some of the data requested and thus projections were very hard to make. The projections that were made for growth in all categories were ambitious but yet possible to meet when the right programs and strategies were used. Small Hispanic and African American sample groups made it nearly impossible to develop valid projections on growth because of sample validity.

The school district had graduation rates for Hispanics and African Americans that were close to majority population's graduation rates. A Native American graduation rate of 40% was extremely problematic. The proposal did not provide strategies for improving those graduation rates or indicate how the RTTD program would improve those statistics. At minimum research findings about programs that had proven successful and the RCAS plans to consider them should have been included. Information about college enrollment and postsecondary degree attainment were not found.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	7
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The RCAS proposal was inadequate in demonstrating a clear track record of success. The proposal provided minimal quantitative data for making judgments required for this criteria. Much of the information in this section was general descriptions of the programs that RCAS has used and the partners it has worked during the past few years.</p> <p>RCAS in its proposal demonstrated some evidence of success in the past four years in advancing elementary student learning and achievement when compared to other schools in South Dakota. No data was provided for similar gains for secondary students. Considerable effort was given in the proposal to descriptions of programs and other efforts used to seek improvement but considerable of the required information dealing with specific year by year grade gains or losses were not provided.</p> <p>There was information given about achieving ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools as it related to General Beadle Elementary school. However the information was descriptive and had no information about actual gains or losses in performance measures over the years before and after the interventions. Most of the information provided on this intervention was about facility changes and the inclusion of community partners.</p> <p>There was general information provided on how they intended to Improve student learning outcomes and close achievement gaps. Some information was provided related to raising student achievement, high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates. However they were generalities that lacked the specifics necessary for implementation.</p> <p>There was general information provided on how they made student performance data available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. The proposal noted that district and state website had detailed information by buildings. Also, they noted that the local newspapers and individual school report cards provided additional print building and district information for those who did not use technology. The proposal stated that Individual student data was provided to parents and students by their teacher.</p>		

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCAS proposal earned medium points because the district in its proposal noted “process, practices and investments” informational efforts were required of all public schools in South Dakota and RCAS did not go beyond those requirements. The proposal noted that all budgetary considerations, including individual salaries, agreements and salary schedules were published in the local newspaper and/or were available on the RCAS website. Negotiated agreements and salary schedules were also available to the public on district websites. Public meetings were held to engaged the community in the budgetary process and recommendations for budget reductions. The local newspaper, <i>the Rapid City Journal</i>, provided information about the budget process, declines in state funding, salary negotiations, accountability/school report cards and other aspects of district/school administration, management. Points were subtracted because the proposal did not highlight any special efforts to provide increased transparency beyond state expectations. For most of the building specific data, parents, students and the public had to research the information on websites. People who do not have access to the Internet or the local paper were likely to be less informed.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCAS proposal was strong in documenting a workable context for implementation. The RCAS proposal provided detailed information about South Dakota statutory, and regulatory requirements that permitted a personalized learning program to operate in South Dakota. A letter from the South Dakota Superintendent of Education indicated RCAS would be allowed to create the personalized learning environments envisioned in the proposal. The proposal provided an interface for how State and District expectations and the RCAS proposal intertwined without conflict given that there were no state law prohibiting this kind of program and because the strong letter of support from the State Superintendent of Education encouraged them to implement such a program.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	4
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCAS proposal earned medium points on stakeholder engagement. The proposal had considerable information on meetings held, information shared and a very long list of signatures. There was no indication of what recommendations for changes were made and what modifications were incorporated as a result of participant suggestions. What was missing and would have been highly desirable are letters of support from the key players; especially students, parents, teacher and administrator's organizations. The proposal does not provide any evidence that there was high enthusiasm and support beyond mere compliance and a required signature. The absence of a letter of support from the collective bargaining representatives for teachers was especially problematic. Comments of support from parents and administrators would have enhanced evidence of support. The long list of signatures was impressive for its length but again, they were diminished in significance because reviewers were unable to sense degrees of support, the amount of commitment to make the proposal successful and the unique contributions each party would pledge.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
(B)(5) Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCAS proposal was inadequate in its analysis of needs and gaps in implementing personalized learning environments.. Analysis was limited to noting that there was a correlation between high poverty and achievement and student graduation. There was no attempt made to provide historical, causation or remediation for these problems. The proposal did not provide the logic or the strategies they intended to use to address the needs or to reduce the gap through the implementaion of the RTTD project.. The proposal should have at least provide research findings of what strategies or programs have proven successful especially those that made extensive use of technology.</p>		

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	12
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The RCAS proposal had an inadequate plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. The proposal showed that considerable thought has been given to what the RCAS want to do and how they will evaluate the learning to see if they were successful. They have also given considerable thought to the technologies and management systems that students will use. Most of the points awarded in this section were given because of that work. Unfortunately, less work has been completed on issues concerned with how the learning experience for students will be implemented. The proposal spoke to a blended combination of technology delivered instruction through the use of a variety of technology intensive models. However the proposal at its core intends to have student learning efforts dependent on more technology content than is presently being used.</p> <p>The proposal did not provide sufficient evidence that all teachers in all content areas will have sufficient knowledge in the use of technology and/or familiarity with the necessary quality content on the Internet or other technology resources by the time they are expect to implement. The proposal does speak to the need for phasing in certain grade or content areas and that is a commendable decision. There are excellent activities to be found on the Internet and on CDs but those “technology jewels” need to be incorporated within a comprehensive curriculum. The proposal did not address how the district would accommodations and provide high-quality strategies for high-need students. At minimum, the proposal writers should have demonstrated knowledge of the research and existence of technology-rich programs that have had successful results.</p> <p>The proposal did not seem to address the reality that there are teachers and students who dislike and fear learning through technology and will need special assistance in working through those technology concerns. Perhaps RCAS has already dealt with how to incorporate and sequence technology use in their curriculum but that knowledge was not apparent in this proposal. The proposal does not give evidence that the linkage between the student “playlist” and the expected curriculum that may or may not utilize technology at any given time had been sufficiently articulated to ensure personal learning for each student. The implementation design also did not make sufficient accommodations for inclusion of “technology reluctant teachers and students.” The proposal did not provide evidence that all teachers will be equipped to guide students choices in all the various pathways</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The RCAS proposal had strengths and weaknesses in this teaching and leading section. This proposal was at its best when dealing with issues concerned with staff development. Clearly the writers of this proposal were familiar with the research and literature associated with staff development. RCAS clearly has had success in preparing teachers and administrators to make important educational changes. Points are easily given on how the necessary staff development will be delivered. The delivery usually utilized TIES and PLC teaming in a variety of ways and for different tasks and apparently that is a true and reliable means of solving staff development considerations. The plan proposed for providing staff development addressed the first three subheading of this proposal.</p> <p>While the delivery of the staff development is exemplary, that high quality was not evident in the design and structure of an implementation plan. The proposal needed more discussion of expected outcomes and the assessments that will be used to measure the effectiveness of the new technology-intensive approaches used to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects such as mathematics and science, and specialty areas such as special education. There was insufficient informatilon about teacher and principal evaluation systems.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The RCAS proposal earned High points for practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning. Some of the specifics for the positive review were:</p> <p>(a) The central office had structures that have worked well in the past. The central office design was relatively flat and responsibilities are clearly defined by offices with names that defined their functions. RCAS plan for integrating RTTD ensure that it would not be orphaned or isolated from other district supports.</p> <p>(b) Buildings utilized combination of traditional administrators and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that provided building leadership. The PLC made most decisions related to staff develop and improvement efforts. They made these decision through shared decision-making, collaborative efforts and discussions of research-based best practices.</p> <p>(c) Students were given multiple opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery as defined in course requirements.</p> <p>(d) Students were given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards in multiple comparable ways that include various technologies, performances and other forms of demonstrated mastery. In the future, more robust data systems, such as the new STARS, will allow demonstration of mastery on smaller formative assessments that will provide guidance to students about specific sub-areas of progress and credit attainment.</p> <p>(e) The district intended to develop learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities, gifted students and English learners. Points were deducted because this work was not very advanced and completing the necessary work with all teachers will likely take longer than the projected in the proposal.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The RCAS proposal earned high points on LEA Policy and infrastructure for the following reasons. The proposal had expectations that every student and teacher will have a computing device that they can have with him/her at all times in school. In addition, students and educators can take their computing devices home thus ensuring universal access to instructional materials and other information used in the program. The 1 to 1 design addressed many of the access questions in school. The 1 to 1 project design also addressed access issues for school work that is pre-loaded on to the computers.</p> <p>The proposal described a human resources intensive technical support and repair system that will be available to all students and educators. Proposal writers appear to have anticipated most of the technical issues that were likely to occur during the life of the RTTD project. Less clear was continued support for supporting non-technology needs. There will likely need to be considerable more staff-development and content/technology integration work to make the program as effective as envisioned.</p> <p>In previous sections, the proposal described programs such as Skyward, STARS, and Information Manage Systems that allowed parents and students rich access to their own records and the curriculum and assessments relevant to each student. For those students, parents and community members that have home Internet connections, the issue of open data formats appeared to not be a problem for accessing information that is important and relevant to them. Proposal writers noted on several occasions that importance of selecting and using equipment and databases that are inter-operable across platforms and software and those issues appeared to have been addressed.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCAS proposal earned high points for its continuous improvement process. The high points were awarded because RCAS has identified and will hire an experienced external evaluator (Dr. Nancy Hall) who will work with a district evaluation team with decision making authority to use formative, on-going evaluations to make continuous improvement modifications. The external evaluator will use an exemplary evaluation design that will provide quantitative data for making judgments outlined in this criteria. The evaluation team will have the authority to make changes that the evaluation findings suggested were necessary for making the project a success. At minimum, the evaluation will promote organizational learning, provide feedback for decision-making, promote collaboration and communication among grant leaders and evaluators, and provide a continuous process for planning, acting, observing, and reflection within the day-to-day operations of the grant. The proposal lost points because it did not provide a rich description of how it would publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by RTTD. It also did not have a chart defining the district's (as contrasted to the evaluators)' responsibilities for addressing issues associated with continues improvement. That plan should have defined at least responsibilities, people responsible, performance indicators and timelines</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCAS proposal earned high points for how it intends to provide ongoing communication and engagement. The proposal noted that multiple avenues will be utilized to communicate and engage with internal and external stake holders. Some of the avenues included web based information housed on RCAS website and accessed through the Skyward/Stars teacher and family/student portals, semi-annually community meetings and PLC and collaborative work groups. The proposal lost one point because it did not have an implementation chart that described tasks, people responsible, performance indicators and timelines.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCAS proposal had incomplete performance measures. Except for the 4th and 11th grades, RCAS did not provide data for all the required measures as it did not have the necessary base data at this time. For the 4th and 11th the performance measure projections and future expectations were appropriate and challenging. RCAS identified 13 of its own performance measures for the various defined grade categories. The measures were appropriate for those grades. The proposal noted that the performance measures will likely change when new management systems and programs are implemented...The proposal earned two points for providing information about the 4th and 11th grades and for identifying its own 13 appropriate measures. It lost three points because the present measures do not have required information specifically targets, adequate rationale for selection, or how they will be reviewed and measured overtime as measures of implementation progress</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: <p>A high score was given to this criteria. The design and questions of this evaluation plan were excellent. The evaluation plan used a logic model designed around planned actions and guiding questions. The evaluation plan aligned Race to the Top priorities and Rapid City Area Schools goals and objectives. The focus of the evaluation was to provide evaluations from the perspective of: (1) Grant wide view of policies and practices including management and relationship, resource management and communication; (2) Grant implementation; and (3) Grant impact. The guiding questions provided a</p>		

comprehensive framework for evaluating effectiveness of investments. The proposal provided a plans for evaluating the effectiveness of RTTD funded activities. The evaluation plan was designed to provide evaluations of professional development, the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results, and the effectiveness of school leadership teams to make decisions, how well the community was involved and how technology was implemented and helped in those efforts previously noted. Evaluation of compensation reforms was not part of the evaluation because there were no new compensation initiatives.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCAS budget earned medium points for the budget for the project. The information provided by RCAS was excellent on how RTTD funds were planned to be used. A great deal of thought and analysis was provided for each activity and the linkage of each related expenditure. The costs associated with those activities appeared to be reasonable and sufficient. Although some narrative was provided for how other district funds would be used, there was no attempt to quantify those contributions. Line 12 of the overall budget and subsequent budgets was left blank. That omission gave the impression that there had been no efforts to create partnerships or to use district funding to supplement RTTD funding. The proposal had insufficient discussion of one time investments versus those that would be on-going.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCAS proposal earned medium points on sustainability of project goals. The proposal provided quality information on how computing devices would be replaced every four years and how it intended to use some of the present text book funds for purchase of technology content. The proposal did not address how other contractual support, continued external evaluation and high levels of continued professional development would be maintained. Discussions of what spending priorities now covered with RTTT funds would be continued, reduced or concluded would have been helpful in reviewing this section.</p> <p>The applicant has a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The plan should include support from state and local government leaders and financial support. Such a plan may include a budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds. A plan and budget for the three years after the term of the grant that included budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds would have been very useful.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: <p>The RCAS proposal earned medium points for its competitive preference priority. The plan provided a description of the coherent and sustainable partnership organized through the North Rapid City Community School Partnership located primarily at the General Beadle Community School complex. The proposal provided a rich picture of the many activities already occurring there. The proposal also provided a snapshot of the additional activities that would occur as a result of the inclusion of RTTD programs. Those activities included conducting a comprehensive community needs assessment, establishing a strategic planning process, establishing action teams and designing a longitudinal data system to study and evaluate strategic actions and interventions.</p>		

Although not explicitly stated, the RTTD'S value added contribution appeared to be using the RTTD project's expertise in creating evaluation plans and expertise in creating interactive databases. The proposal was much clearer about what data elements and questions they wanted answered. Obtaining carefully answers to those questions would be very helpful to establishing priorities and allocate funds to those activities having the most impact. The proposal had minimal responses to sub-expectations 4, 5 and 6 noted in the competitive preference priority.

In summary, the proposal earned points because it adequately addressed sub-expectations 1 and 2 and it had a very rich response to sub-expectation 3. The proposal lost points because it had minimal responses to sub-expectations 4, 5 and 6 and thus left the competitive preference priority quite incomplete.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

RCAS in its proposal addressed how the proposal will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching. Some it addressed quite well. It has aligned its proposal with college and career-ready standards. It has elegantly built and used data systems that address the requirements of RTTD. It had limited but successful experiences in turning around low-performing schools.

The assurance that requires the most work is preparing effective teachers to function in a technology rich personalized learning environment. The evaluation systems will not be available until 2014-15. RCAS appeared to have excellent teachers and leaders but they will be expected to operated in new personalized, technology intensive settings that few have experienced to the degree the proposal expects them to reach very quickly. It appeared to this reviewer that RCAS faced a very steep learning curve.

The proposal was very effective in indicating the research foundations of its efforts. It had great strengths in describing how professional development would be delivered. Evaluation was a very apparent strength. The proposal had issues in responding to criteria that had quantitative basis. Often the district appeared not to have sufficient base data and it lost many points because of that reason. The proposal largely ignored questions of documenting concretely the non-RTTT funds that would be used to make the propose project successful. The decision to use signatures instead of letters of support from key players and partners prevented the proposal from demonstrating depths of commitment and unique contributions.

Total	210	141
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